

SINGLE-FAMILY INFILL DEVELOPMENT

COMMUNITY RESOURCE

Understanding the Benefits of
Infill Housing

November 2022

Image Source: County Planning

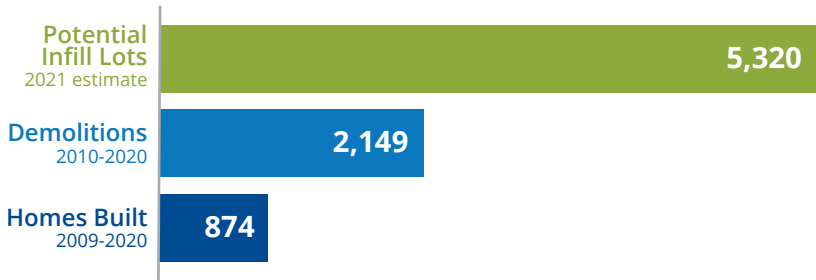
SINGLE-FAMILY INFILL OVERVIEW

Residential infill development is new construction of housing on vacant lots within established neighborhoods, often where homes have been demolished. Residential infill ranges from individual homes and attached homes to large-scale development including multi-family complexes. Single-family infill refers to small-scale infill development where a single home is built on a single lot. Infill projects are common in the First Suburbs, as they are typically built-out with only smaller, scattered vacant lots available.

Since the 2006 foreclosure crisis, many First Suburb communities experienced a decline in housing quality due to disinvestment and population loss. With the assistance of the Cuyahoga Land Bank, First Suburbs proactively addressed blight through demolitions, totaling 2,149 demolitions from 2010 to 2020. Although demolitions create opportunities for new housing, construction has been slow, with only 874 homes being built between 2009 and 2020. As of 2021, there are approximately 5,320 vacant lots in the First Suburbs that can potentially be used for single-family infill housing.

Demand for housing in the First Suburbs has been growing, as families are seeking smaller homes in walkable neighborhoods. Thus, producing more housing is important to keep up with demand and to maintain affordability.

SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSING IN FIRST SUBURBS



A Potential Infill Lot in a First Suburb

Image Source: County Planning, Garfield Heights, Ohio

COMMUNITY BENEFITS OF INFILL

Expansion of residential infill development is an important element in neighborhood reinvestment, allowing communities to address housing demand while maintaining neighborhood character and affordability. Benefits of residential infill development include:



ENHANCING THE HOUSING STOCK

There is an opportunity to develop new housing that accommodates smaller households or intergenerational families, and incorporates marketable elements such as modern floor plans, accessible features, and a variety of price points.



IMPROVING PROPERTY VALUES

Residential infill development attracts investment, thereby marginally increasing adjacent property values, which is important for neighborhoods that have experienced prolonged disinvestment.



LOWERING COST OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Through residential infill development, vacant lots become occupied, further contributing to the tax base and spreading the cost of public services. The additional tax money helps support and maintain transit, sidewalks, utilities, schools, and public safety.



STRENGTHENING NEIGHBORHOODS

Residential infill development eliminates vacant lots and adds new homes to existing neighborhoods—meaning more residents to maintain properties and more appealing and safer streets in vibrant and resilient neighborhoods.

SINGLE-FAMILY INFILL DESIGN

KEY EXTERIOR DESIGN FEATURES

Exterior design is important to ensure infill housing is harmonious with the surrounding neighborhood. The images on the next page show an example of two vacant lots redeveloped with two well-designed infill homes. Key design features are highlighted on one of the infill homes and listed below.

- 1 Scale:** The height and size of the infill home is complimentary to surrounding homes, preserving privacy and space
- 2 Architectural Style:** The infill home incorporates and balances modern touches with the existing characteristics of surrounding homes
- 3 Parking:** Parking is located ideally behind the residence to emphasize walkability
- 4 Entrance:** The porch and main door face the street and are in line with surrounding structures to create a welcoming entrance
- 5 Frontage:** The front facade of the home interacts well with the public right-of-way with a front yard similar in size and depth to surrounding properties

OTHER IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

Infill homes can also incorporate additional features that make them an asset to the neighborhood. For example, the two single-family infill homes displayed in the image at the bottom right were specifically designed to be accessible and allow seniors to live comfortably and independently. Some of those features include wide doorways, open floor plans, first-floor bedrooms, and easy-to-operate handles, faucets, and windows.

Another important consideration is including environmentally-friendly features that also provide cost savings to the homeowner. These features include water-saving fixtures and energy-efficient systems such as lighting, heating, cooling, and ventilation.

SINGLE-FAMILY INFILL EXAMPLE (BEFORE & AFTER)



Image Source: Google Map Street View, June 2019, Cleveland, Ohio



Image Source: Cuyahoga Land Bank, Cleveland, Ohio

ADDRESSING COMMON QUESTIONS

Since residential infill development takes place in established neighborhoods, community members often have questions. Below are some common questions and general guidance. Contact your local municipality to learn about specific regulations and approaches to residential infill development.

1. How will infill housing near me affect my property?

The impact of infill housing on nearby properties varies depending on the location, the scale of housing investment, the housing market, and a city's regulations. However, typically a marginal increase in property value can be expected. Small-scale infill housing tends to have a more incremental impact.

2. Is infill housing denser or larger than existing homes?

New infill housing can be developed at different scales, which could include single-family homes, town homes, or multi-family homes, depending on what is compatible with adjacent properties. Additionally, a city's regulations can help ensure the new housing is adequately spaced from surrounding homes and located reasonably from the street.

3. Will my neighborhood become overcrowded?

Many neighborhoods often have residential populations well below what they were designed for, as indicated by vacant lots where homes previously stood. These lots are generally smaller and are often redeveloped with single-family infill homes, which helps restore a neighborhood's population size incrementally.

4. Will the character of my neighborhood be changed?

To ensure new housing fits with adjacent properties, municipalities can adopt design guidelines that outline desired or required elements for infill development. Additionally, they can provide pre-approved designs.

5. Will new housing cause flooding or disturb street trees?

Cities will often require supporting information that demonstrate the new infill home will not have unintended consequences such as flooding or disturbances to surrounding landscaping such as street trees.

6. How can disturbances from construction be minimized?

Cities can have regulations and best practices to minimize potential disturbances from infill construction. Some possible interventions include outlining allowable hours of operation to address noise concerns and requiring screening to keep construction from obstructing the sidewalk and to contain debris.

ROLES IN RESIDENTIAL INFILL

Residential infill development is successful when there is cooperation among various stakeholders. Below are key stakeholders and their roles.

Community Members

Community members have valuable firsthand experience and knowledge on the day-to-day needs and concerns of their communities. There are several ways community members can get involved:

- Participate in public meetings regarding new development
- Contact the City and the developer about construction concerns
- Encourage the City to update its regulations or planning documents
- Serve on a committee or join a neighborhood group/ block club
- Purchase an infill lot to build a new home

Development Professionals

Development professionals are responsible for presenting development plans that are financially sound and adhere to regulations; providing supporting data and studies to reduce unintended consequences; engaging the community early in the development process to ensure buy-in; and constructing responsibly.

Local Municipality

Municipalities review plans, issue permits, and conduct inspections of new developments. They are responsible for fostering development that aligns with the community's overall needs and goals by establishing and enforcing the rules and regulations that guide the development process. They can assume a key role in incentivizing and promoting infill development.

Other Governmental Agencies and Non-Profits

The Cuyahoga Land Bank can be instrumental as they acquire properties and develop them themselves or sell them to homeowners and small developers. They can also provide technical assistance and additional resources.

County Planning can also help update zoning codes and can engage stakeholders to establish development goals and a plan for the future.



Image Source: South Euclid, Ohio

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

This resource is made possible by the Northeast Ohio First Suburbs Consortium in partnership with the Cuyahoga Land Bank and First Federal Lakewood and is designed by the Cuyahoga County Planning Commission.

Northeast Ohio First Suburb Consortium

www.firstsuburbs.org/

The first government-led advocacy organization in the country working to revitalize mature developed communities, and raise public and political awareness of the problems and inequities associated with urban sprawl and urban disinvestment

Cuyahoga Land Bank

www.cuyahogalandbank.org/

A non-profit government-purposed entity tasked with acquiring blighted properties and returning them to productive use to increase property values, support community goals, and improve the quality of life for Cuyahoga County residents

Cuyahoga County Planning Commission

www.countyplanning.us/

An independent governmental agency that informs and provides services in support of the short and long term comprehensive planning, quality of life, environment, and economic development of Cuyahoga County and its cities, villages, and townships

Single-Family Zoning Analysis

www.countyplanning.us/singlefamily

The Single-Family Zoning Analysis aims to identify issues within zoning and outline best practices for making constructing desired infill housing more practicable

Contact your local municipality for the most up-to-date information about residential infill development in your community.



County Planning



First Federal
Lakewood

